



DIPLOMAT

Diplomatic challenges for women are similar to other professions

3

8-9



LOCAL

Heroic tales of the invasion

10

LOCAL

French Ambassador denies irregularities at visa center



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250 Fils

Invasion scars and essence of freedom

Freedom does not come Free



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

On Tuesday, Kuwait solemnly marks the 32nd anniversary of that dark day on 2 August, 1990 when the country's flame of freedom was snuffed out by marauding Iraqi forces. The invasion and subsequent seven-month long occupation witnessed horrendous acts of brutality, wanton destruction of the country's oil infrastructure, its facilities and amenities, as well as rampant looting of government and private properties. The shroud of darkness that descended over Kuwait was finally dispelled only by the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991.

Today, the country is a manifestation

of what can be achieved through determination and perseverance of a people who clawed back their freedom from an abyss, when the very existence of their nation was at stake. Despite Kuwait's relatively quick return to normalcy after liberation, the harrowing experience of the invasion and its aftermath has etched an ineradicable scar on the psyche of those that lived through that period. Thirty odd years since the invasion may be a fleeting moment in the timeline of a nation, but for some people this appears to have been time enough to forget the events of 2 August and its consequences. An entire generation has now grown up that had no direct experience of those agonizing seven months in Kuwait's past. For many of them, the entire episode of invasion and



occupation are nothing more than pages in history textbooks. They have grown up in an environment of

complete freedom and have come to take this concept for granted. To them freedom is a given, it is

something they do not think about twice as they go about their lives.

But for those who lived through the horrors and trauma of the invasion, that dark period is an experience they would like to forget, but cannot. The pain and suffering they endured is something they would like to erase from their memories, but cannot. Physical and mental wounds from the invasion may have healed, but the scars inflicted on their persona are indelible, run deep and remain very real. These are the people who still remain fully appreciative of the immense value and significance of freedom, and they are the ones most aware that freedom is poignantly felt and most deeply desired when we no longer have it.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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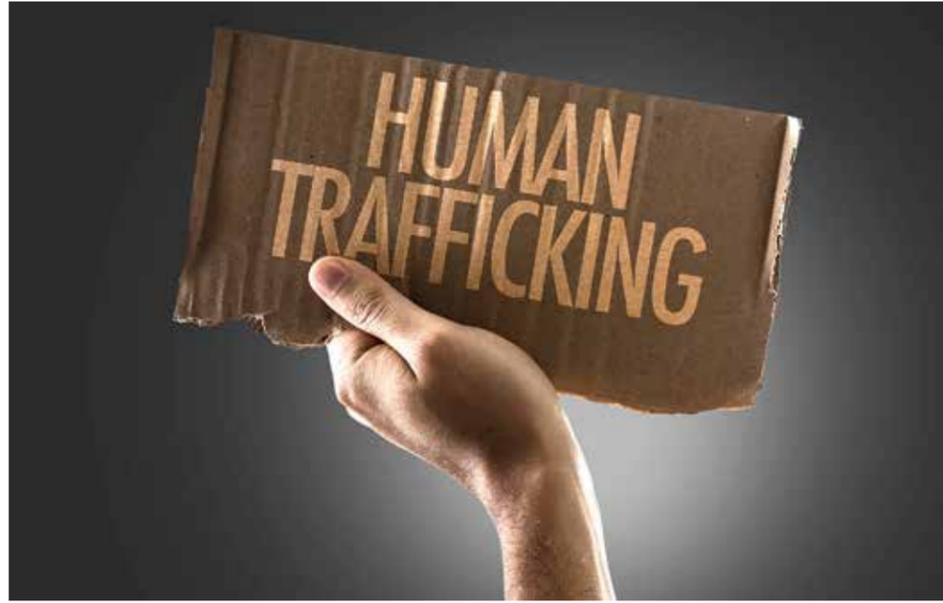
IMO Kuwait launches awareness campaign on human trafficking

International Migration Organization's (IMO) mission in Kuwait launched last Thursday an awareness campaign ahead of World Day against Trafficking in Persons, which falls on 30 July.

The campaign, organized in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry of Kuwait and in partnership with the national committee, tasked with executing national strategy to prevent human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, highlighted concerns over trafficking of persons.

The IOM mission noted that since 2018, it had facilitated the return of 400 individuals to their homelands in cooperation with Kuwaiti authorities and civil society organizations. On its part, the standing national committee affirmed that Kuwait had taken various steps to ensure the rights of foreign workers in Kuwait, including setting up laws to ensure that they were protected.

The committee pointed out that laws 6/2010 and 68/2015 were ratified to protect workers in the private sector and also promote the rights of domestic employees, and a shelter



for domestic workers was established to provide legal protection and health services. In addition, through law 5/2006, Kuwait

had ratified the protocol to prevent human trafficking especially of women and children as part of a supplement to the United Nations

Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Almost every country in the world is affected by trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as guardian of UNTOC and its Protocols assists States in their efforts to implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

UNTOC protocols define Trafficking in Persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

DDI wins center of excellence recognition



Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) has been recently approved as a 'Center of Excellence' by the International Diabetes Federation, for its distinguished role in the field of research and the medical care it provides, in addition to the institute's cooperation and efforts represented in optimal care, patient awareness and comprehensive care in the field of diabetes and its various complications.

Announcing this achievement, Director General of DDI, Dr. Qais Al-Duwairi, said the recognition by International Diabetes Federation — an umbrella organization of over 230 national diabetes associations in more than 160 countries and territories — was yet another attestation of the excellent services provided by DDI and its commitment to continuously improve the quality of its medical care based on the latest research.

He added that the accreditation achieved by the institute will contribute to strengthening its role at the regional and international levels, as the institute will now be part of the international cooperative network that coordinates and prepares for more efforts in the field of diabetes awareness and enabling patients to control their diabetes.

The latest accreditation adds to numerous other acknowledgements of the achievements of DDI, including the accreditation obtained by the institute's laboratory from the College of American Pathology, and the Canadian Accreditation Commission at the diamond level, in addition to the fact that DDI is the only center in the region licensed to hold the Daphne Program. The institute also has a training center 'Medical Skills' accredited by the American Heart Association, which offers many accredited medical courses.

Dr. Al-Duwairi pointed out that the Dasman Diabetes Institute, which was established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, offers many distinguished educational courses for different age groups, in diabetes as well as in many other specialized programs. The institute also regularly holds advanced training programs aimed to train nutritionists, nurses, podiatrists, educators and other professionals working in all hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Health. The institute is also fully prepared to provide everything that contributes to improving the standards and quality of patient care in Kuwait, added Dr. Al-Duwairi

No increase in fees at private schools this year

Private international schools in Kuwait have announced that the 2022-2023 academic year would begin in a phased manner from Sunday 28 August to Tuesday 30 August. They added that despite the hike in prices of everything, the tuition fees for the next academic year will not be increased.

Announcing this, President of the Private Schools Union, Noura Al-Ghanim, said that the shortage of teaching and non-teaching personnel in some Arab and foreign schools continues unabated. In this regard she urged the concerned authorities to take measures to allow workers in the educational and health sectors to bring in their families, thereby facilitating the process of recruiting new foreign workers.

She explained that many foreign teachers refuse to return to Kuwait without their families, and that prevailing government decisions do not allow entry of the families of teachers, except in some exceptional cases. Al-Ghanim added that educational institutions are not about a teacher and director only, but need other workers, as they need security guards, cleaners, bus drivers, maintenance staff and other workers. However, the cost of labor currently available in Kuwait "is very high, and many are not qualified to work in schools."

Al-Ghanim praised the great response

of the Ministry of Interior and the Public Authority of Manpower during the COVID-19 crisis, hoping that this flexibility will remain in the recruitment of foreign workers to work in private schools, and that the foreign teacher and his wife, if they work in Kuwait, be allowed to bring in their children over the age of 14, stressing that it is not possible for the teacher and his wife to come and leave their 15 and 16-year-old children alone.

On the subject of tuition fees not being increased, it is interesting to note that foreign schools have to abide by Ministerial Resolution No. 52/2021 which was approved by the Ministry of Education in 2021. The resolution also warns of penalties being applied in case schools violate the tuition-fee structure approved by the resolution.

According to Resolution No 52/2021, each student of the school should be provided with a list specifying the tuition fees owed by the guardian, the system for payment, their value and due dates. Private schools are entitled to charge registration fees for the academic year 2022-2023 that are deducted from the tuition fees owed by the student for the academic year, which is KD50 per student in Arab schools and foreign schools with the Pakistani, Indian and Filipino curriculum, and KD100 per student in other foreign schools.





Diplomatic challenges for women are similar to other professions

By Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

Ambassador of Kenya H.E. Halima Abdille Mahmoud is a charming young diplomat who comes across as soft spoken and reserved. Even though she is relatively new to the world of diplomacy, the ambassador has quickly made her mark in Kuwait diplomatic circles with her active participation and positive approach. In an exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait Managing Editor, Ambassador Mahmoud began by detailing her journey into diplomacy.

"My journey in public life started from my early years at university when I was a student leader. The newly promulgated 2010 Kenyan Constitution had ushered in new opportunities for Kenyan women, youth and marginalized communities, in ensuring equal opportunities, particularly the two-third gender rule in leadership positions. The concept of two-third rule is entrenched through article 81 (b) which states: 'Not more than two thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender'.

"In 2011, I began working with a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that focused on issues of good governance and sensitization of citizens on the New Constitution. It was during this period that I developed a passion for politics and served at the Senate from 2013 to 2017. In 2019, I was appointed Kenya's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait.

In this regard, I would like to add that I have had several mentors who influenced by choice of career. I would especially like to mention the name of Professor Olive Mugenda, who was Vice Chancellor of Kenyatta University during my university days. She was



H.E. Halima Abdille Mahmoud, Ambassador of Kenya

an outstanding role model for me as during her tenure at the helm of the university, she exhibited transformational leadership which touched the lives of many Kenyans. This gave me inspiration to fulfill my dream as a positive role model for the youth. Other notable role models include women leadership at the apex of the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs such as Ministers Amb. Amina Mohamed, Amb. Monica Juma and the incumbent, Amb. Raychelle Omamo. Though this is my first appointment as an ambassador, my previous tenures have included a career as an educator, social worker and a politician."

Turning to the challenges

she faced as a woman diplomat, Ambassador Mahmoud noted: "The challenges of a woman diplomat are not that different from those faced by women in other professions. As a diplomat, one may require to be flexible, as issues that require attention may emerge abruptly hence staying away from family at short notice

becomes part of the job. In any case, I have a supportive and capable team which works with me to meet the mandate of the Embassy.

"My experiences in Kuwait as an ambassador have been no different. Kenya and Kuwait enjoy cordial relations, and ever since I have been in Kuwait, I have received a very warm welcome. I have not experienced any obstacles during my visits to the Diwanis, though during the COVID-19 crisis my interactions were limited. God willing, I am looking forward to further fruitful engagements in future as well."

In reply to what she enjoys most in her life as a diplomat, the Kenyan top diplomat in Kuwait said: "I enjoy engagements and cooperating with the host Government to cement long lasting ties between Kenya and Kuwait. In addition, the Diwanis I have attended offered me a chance to visit different segments of Kuwaiti society and this gave me the opportunity to learn more about the rich culture and tradition of the people of Kuwait.

"In addition, I have several hobbies that I engage in whether in Kuwait or elsewhere. These include, creating new friends, contacts and learning of different cultures and traditions.

On the role of women in Kuwait society, the ambassador was more effusive, "Kuwait has made remarkable gains for women in the region by cementing their democratic rights through voting. In the judiciary, I am delighted to note that there were about eight (8) women judges, the first country to do so in the GCC. Likewise, the domestic violence bill gives mothers the right to authorize medical treatment for their children. These are among others positive reforms touching on women in Kuwait.

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Kuwait has made remarkable gains for women in the region by cementing their democratic rights through voting

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RTI supports democracy, cements political, civil rights

The Right to Information law approved by the National Assembly in August 2020 and began to be implemented from March 2021 reflects Kuwait's commitment to undertaking necessary measures in combating corruption and bolstering principles of transparency, as it grants individuals the right to obtain information held by public entities.

Stressing the importance of this law in achieving administrative transparency and boosting governmental accountability, the Head of Investigations division at the Kuwait Anti-corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulhameed Al-Hamar pointed out that Article (2) of the law stipulates that every person has the right to access administrative decisions that affect his rights and familiarize himself with information contained in any document that relates to him.

Adding that approval of the law stems from Kuwait's efforts in supporting democracy, and cementing political and civil rights, Al-Hamar noted that the law helped improve Kuwait's ranking on the Corruption Perceptions Index for 2019-2021 by three grades, which was higher than the average rating of Middle Eastern and North African nations.

Al-Hamar added that the law instructs



entities to facilitate a person's access to information and ensure its disclosure in the time and manner stipulated in the law, and that penalties for unjustified withholding of information, or providing false data, includes incarceration for period of no more than two years and/or fine of no more than KD3000.

He further noted that since the law began to be implemented only in 2021, it was too early to evaluate adherence by government entities to the law, as it is fairly new and the monitoring and evaluating process takes time, adding that it is part of Kuwait (2019-2024) strategy to boost integrity and confront corruption.

For his part, the Head of Kuwait's Transparency Society, Majed Al-Mutairi, considered the law the most prominent application of boosting principles of transparency in Kuwait, hoping for even more development in that regard. He added that the law encouraged public entities to adopt voluntary disclosure of information, adding that the society organized a campaign aimed at raising awareness among concerned government employees and instructing them on application of law stipulations and fully comprehending its dimensions.

The law also specifies that each entity shall designate one or more competent employee to consider requests of information, who must have sufficient experience and knowledge with the necessary authority to search and access the requested information. The law adds that entities shall be committed to publish on their websites within three years from the effective date of this a law a manual that contains lists of the information available for disclosure. Moreover, data compromising public interest including infringement on private lives, or the pursuit of justice, is protected by the law as it also guarantees the right of individuals to submit grievances in case their request for information was denied.

Marriages increase, so too do divorces

According to statistics issued last week by the Central Statistical Bureau shows that ever since the country began to emerge from the shadow of COVID-19 pandemic, the number of marriages among citizens in Kuwait have soared, but sadly, so too have divorces.

The figures show that 2021 recorded the highest rate of marriages and divorces over the past five years, with the marriage rate rising

28.9 percent, and the divorce rate increasing by 13.7 percent.

Data from the Central Statistical Bureau reveal that in the five year period between 2017 and 2021, the highest marriage rate was in 2021, with the number of marriages reaching 13,804, including 11,322 between Kuwaiti men and women, an increase of 82 percent from a year earlier.

Meanwhile, the number of Kuwaiti men marrying non-Kuwaiti women was nearly 1,783 cases, or 13 percent and non-Kuwaiti men marrying Kuwaiti women were 699 cases, or 5 percent.



In another bit of statistics revealed last week, the Ministry of Interior noted that a total of 2,228,747 vehicles were registered in the names of citizens and residents between 1 January, 2006 and 15 February 2022.

Providing the figures in answer to a query raised by parliamentarian, Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi, the ministry also noted that based on their licensed use, the number of licenses granted to private cars totaled 1,892,208, while 436 licenses were issued for taxis. In addition, 2,768 licenses were given for public transport vehicles, and 35,214 licenses for private passenger transport vehicles.

Innovative new drugs lead to rise in addiction

The sale of 'laced' beverages is booming in the country, with people engaged in this business making heaps of money from selling sugary juices mixed with narcotic substances such as 'shabu' and 'larica' among others. Most of these vendors target young men and women between the ages of 18 and 40 years, as it is considered easier and safer to sell to this clientele.

Some vendors have become so audacious as to put up signs over their business advertising the sale of narcotics-laced juices, but in coded signs that are understood by customers who use these substances. A bottle of laced juice is said to be sold for around KD5, which is considered a low enough price to attract a large number of customers.

Recently, the security authorities were able to nab several Arab vendors from Al-Jahra, Farwaniya, Ahmadi and the Capital governorates. During interrogation, they are reported to have confessed to making large sums of money by selling laced juices to young men and women.

Following these confessions and information on how the business was operating, the security authorities began vigilant monitoring of suspected vendor sites, establishing new checkpoints and increasing foot patrols in suspected areas. The authorities are also reported to have cut off some of the supply routes through which drugs enter the

country, most of which originate from Iraq, Iran and south-east Asia.

However, security officials warn that they can tackle only the supply side of the drug usage problem, and eradicating the drug menace from society requires confronting it from the demand side as well, in cooperation with all stakeholders concerned for the safety and well-being of children and young adults in the country. They called on all members of society to assume their responsibilities, starting with greater family supervision of children, the involvement of civil society organizations, and the ministry of education to combat this scourge from society.

Specialized medical and psychological treatment centers were also being offered to those addicted to drugs. These centers provide a four-stage process to eradicate addiction among victims. This begins with detoxification, developing the addicts abilities to withdraw from drugs, protecting against relapse, and a program to reintegrate addicts into mainstream society.



Mobile food vendors protest collective punishment

Mobile food truck owners have denounced the recent decision of the government, and the heavy-handed measures initiated to close down their operations and remove their vehicles from certain areas, after falsely accusing them of using their vehicles and businesses to traffic in drugs and other narcotic substances.

They complained that the decision to curtail their business activities in some areas, without specifying which areas they were permitted to ply their business, had caused significant monetary losses. They pointed out that the government measures had also impaired their prospects of making a living from their small and medium enterprises, after they had spent a lot of time and money on it, as well as caused damage to their reputation.

The owners termed the actions of the authorities as a collective punishment against them, for the crimes committed by a few unscrupulous people. These people distort the image of Kuwaiti youth, who are committed to their profession and are law abiding citizens. They noted that the campaign to remove their vehicles "was preceded by campaigns of incitement and rumors that they sell drugs and intoxicants, and mix them with beverages." They stressed that the vast majority of young entrepreneurs "are committed to religion and the morals of society, and to the legal regulations followed in the country."

Government authorities responsible for

regulating the issue of commercial mobile food trucks have reportedly held a meeting with food truck owners to look into their claims and submit regulatory proposals regarding their presence in residential areas and on highways.

The government meeting with the owners of the food truck came after their union issued a statement, a day earlier, in which they denounced the government measures, which damaged the business prospects of nearly 4,000 licensed food vehicle operators.

The owners also denied the charges against them, stressing that their projects sell products and foodstuffs subject to the supervision of the competent authorities, and that these projects are "dreams of the Kuwaiti youth, implemented by their owners to provide an alternative to relying on government jobs as a monthly income."





LuLu Hypermarket launches Proudly South African promotion

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, launched its 'Proudly South African 2022' promotion at the Al-Qurain outlet of the hypermarket on 24 July. The Ambassador of South Africa to Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Manelisi GENGE, cut the ceremonial ribbon to inaugurate the event, in the presence of top management of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait, and a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers. Among the diplomatic personnel attending the event were the Ambassadors of the Kingdom of Lesotho, H.E. Boomo Frank Sofonia; Charge d' Affairs of the Republic of Zimbabwe, H.E. Younos Abdul Karim; and the Kingdom of Eswatini H.E. Nkhulueko



Horace Dlamini.

The week-long promotion, which runs till 1st August at all branches of the hypermarket in Kuwait, features the best of products from the 'Rainbow Nation' being offered at

very special prices. The wide range and variety of products on offer, including colorful succulent fruits, nuts and other produce, attests to the geographical diversity of the land that allows for the growing of

different food items based on climate, soil and elevation.

Samples of the country's physical variation are evident in the attractive images of iconic monuments and breath-taking landscapes displayed at vantage points across the hypermarkets during the promotion period. The large scenic displays also highlight South Africa's amazing diversity in terms of flora and fauna, and the stupendous tourism potential of the land.

The promotion, which offers shoppers a wide range and multiplicity of high-quality food products, provides them with the opportunity to purchase some of the finest and most popular South African

food items at very special prices. Among the products being offered at incredibly competitive prices are well-known brands such as: Bakers, Blue Diamond, B-Well, Cape Cookies, Cape Herbs, Clark & Sons Inc., Mandela Tea, Nandos, Robertsons, Royal Biltong and many others.

The 'Proudly South African 2022' promotion, which follows the highly successful 'Awesome South Africa 2021' festival held last year at LuLu Hypermarket, underlines the hypermarket's commitment to importing high-quality food and non-food items from around the world, and making them readily available and affordable for shoppers in Kuwait.

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TERMS & CONDITIONS APPLY

Family visas stopped, commercial visas continue

Residency Affairs department at the Ministry of Interior has announced that family visit visas have been temporarily stopped, with only limited visas being issued at the discretion of the undersecretary

and the director general of residency affairs sector or his assistant.

Residency Affairs added that the decision to suspend the issuance of these visas was taken because 20,000 expatriates who

entered the country on family visit visas have apparently not left the country. However, the department stressed that commercial visit visas were continuing to be issued.

Media reports indicate that there is no firm date set for when the issuing of family visit visas would be reinstated, and that the matter was in the hands of the First Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior. But the minister has since been appointed as prime minister, and no replacement has been announced for the post of interior minister, as yet.

The family visit visa closure is said to have been implemented to force expatriates who bring family members or relatives on visit visas to leave the country before the visa expires.



GTD conducts spot technical tests on vehicles

Technical Examination wing of the General Traffic Department (GTD) conducted a spot examination of vehicles in Khaitan area last week that led to over a thousand vehicles being issued citations for various violations.

The safety and security campaign by the GTD was conducted on instruction of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant-General Anwar Al-Barjas, and under the supervision and presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Operations and Traffic Sector Major General Jamal Al-Sayegh, and Director of the technical examination Department Brigadier-General Mishaal Al-Suwaiji.

Motorists were caught unawares as the campaign began in the early hours of morning with security personnel cordoning off Khaitan area and officers from the technical testing center stopped all vehicles and examined them for their road worthiness. The officials issued on the spot

citations if the vehicles were found to be having worn out tires, produced annoying sounds, had faded body paint, used tinted shading on windows. Motorists were also booked if the vehicle emitted noxious exhaust smoke or had other mechanical defects that posed a danger to the lives and property of people.

In a statement on the campaign issued to the media, Brigadier General al-Suwaiji said: "The campaign by the General Traffic Department, which is being implemented by the Technical Inspection Department, will continue throughout the country, to educate motorists about the need to abide by traffic laws and regulations." He added that the aim of the campaign was to raise awareness among drivers on the dangers of driving dilapidated vehicles that lacked security and safety conditions, especially during the summer season, during which vehicle malfunctions are quite common.

He pointed out that motorists have to carry out periodic

maintenance on their vehicles to ensure that the tires were in good condition, the vehicle did not need body painting, and that there was no black fumes being emitted as this caused a severe impact on the environment besides harming the health of other vehicle users and passerby.

Al-Suwaiji stated that "a number of trucks and diesel tanks were seized on the main streets due to the emission of thick smoke and leakage, in addition to endangering the lives of others."

He explained, "During the traffic campaigns, we monitor violators, especially reckless drivers, those emitting annoying sounds by making alterations to their exhausts, shading windows 100 percent, in addition to having valid driving licenses and car registration books."

Revealing that the campaign resulted in the issuing of 1,220 violations, most of which were for motorists driving with an expired driver's license, or expired vehicle registration, and others to those whose vehicles were found to be not road worthy.

In addition, administrative blocks were placed on a number of vehicles, which, he said, would not be lifted until the vehicles conduct the necessary repairs and maintenance, and present the vehicles for a test by specialized technical committee in the technical examination center, and they are checked again by the examiners and engineers before lifting the block.

Al-Suwaiji concluded by stating, "We have noticed a response, cooperation and awareness, among many citizens and residents, to repair their vehicles and not drive dilapidated vehicles, and this gives us comfort and reassurance that the message and traffic awareness has reached a large segment of society."



RECIPE

Quinoa Coconut Payasam



Quinoa, often called a golden grain on account of its health benefits, is a superbly versatile whole grain with which many dishes can be prepared. In this fresh take on the traditional South Indian sweet dessert, the 'payasam', we replace the rice or vermicelli that is usually the main ingredient in payasams with the protein-rich and gluten-free quinoa. To raise the flavor-quotient we then add in a mix of roasted walnuts and strawberry crush as garnish to create a truly exotic dessert.

Total time: 30 to 40 minutes

Serving: 6

Ingredients:

- 2tsp ghee
- 1/2 cup quinoa
- 1 cup water
- 1,1/2 cup coconut milk
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup dry shredded coconut
- 1tsp cinnamon powder
- 1/2 cup jaggery

For garnish:

- Roasted walnuts
- Strawberry crush

Preparation:

- Wash, rinse and soak quinoa in water for 15 minutes
- Toast the quinoa in a pressure cooker with the 1 tsp ghee
- Add the water, close lid, and heat for 5-6 whistles
- Once the steam get released add roasted shredded coconut, milk and coconut milk
- Stir well to avoid lumps
- Melt jaggery in boiled water until frothy and heat until slightly thick, and strain the mixture to remove impurities
- Add the strained syrupy jaggery into the quinoa mixture
- Cook until the payasam reaches a slightly thick consistency
- Add in the cinnamon powder and stir well
- Transfer the mixture to a serving bowl and garnish with roasted walnuts, and the strawberry crush
- Serve warm or at room temperature.



Chef Chhaya Thakker



Indian Chef Chhaya Thakker, who has a huge following online on WhatsApp and YouTube will be sharing her favorite recipes and cooking tips with readers of The Times Kuwait. For feedback, you can write to editortimeskuwait@gmail.com

Nazaha keen to cooperate with all to combat corruption



Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) reaffirmed its keenness to work with other government and non-government organizations to combat corruption and track down corrupt people. Deputy Chairman of Nazaha, Nawaf Al-Mehmel, made this remark while addressing a workshop last week titled, "Probing, Tracking down and Retrieving stolen funds", co-organized by Nazaha and Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds. The event gathered representatives of local and international government and non-government organizations, as well as members of the diplomatic corps from embassies in Kuwait.

Stressing the need for raising public awareness

on the importance of combating corruption, Al-Mehmel noted that Nazaha spares no effort in preventing the risks of corruption and retrieving usurped public funds through cooperation with all concerned agencies inside and outside Kuwait.

Speaking on the occasion, the Resident Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to the State of Kuwait, Nisreen Rubaian, said the UN agencies play an active role in combating all forms of corruption pursuant to the relevant international conventions. She pointed out that the UN agencies believe that combating corruption is crucial for protection of public funds and also has to do with human rights. She added that the UN

efforts to address corruption are clearly evident in the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and its Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR). She also praised Kuwait's trailblazing role in the fight against corruption under the wise instructions of the country's leadership.

Meanwhile, Fahad Al-Nasser, treasurer of Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds, thanked Nazaha for hosting and sponsoring the workshop and establishing direct channels of contact with the competent government bodies. He added, "The workshop is part of the efforts to raise public awareness on corruption and highlights the need to involve civil society and state institutions in the fight against corruption."

Noting that such efforts are in keeping with the objectives of the UNCAC and the provisions of the founding act of Nazaha, Al-Nasser called on the civil society to shoulder their responsibilities and work with the relevant institutions to restore stolen assets and benefit from successful experiences of other countries in this regard.

Kuwait banks feature on list of top banks

The list of 100 top banks in emerging markets in 2021, compiled by Fitch Ratings Agency, features four banks from Kuwait — National Bank of Kuwait, Kuwait Finance House, Burgan Bank and Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait.

National Bank of Kuwait tops the list from Kuwait with total assets of US\$109.9 billion and total loans of \$67.3 billion as at the end of the fiscal year 2021, followed by the Kuwait Finance House



(KFH) with total assets of \$72 billion and loans of \$39.7 billion. Burgan Bank came in third spot with total assets of \$72 billion and \$23.4 billion in total loans, while Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait with total assets of \$18.6 billion and total loans of \$12 billion, was in fourth place.

The UAE, with seven banks in the Fitch listing ranked top among the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, followed in second spot by Qatar with five banks. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia with four banks each vied for third spot in the GCC, while Bahrain and Oman with one bank each making it to the list in 2021. In publishing the list, Fitch stated that it would soon launch a

series of reports that follow a sample of 100 large banks from emerging markets, as defined by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The focus of the reports would be on banks that issued bonds in the capital markets and would be selected based on the total size to its balance sheets.

The largest banks by asset volume in the sample are located in China, followed by Brazil, India, Qatar and the UAE. China has the largest number of banks in the list (12 banks), followed by Brazil (8), the UAE and India (7 banks each), while 35 of the 100 banks are located in Asia, 24 in Latin America, 22 in the Middle East, 10 in Africa and 9 in Europe.

Project delays as construction costs soar

Scores of contractors working on government projects in Kuwait are reportedly refusing to continue with their projects until their allocated budgets are revised upwards due to significant increase in construction costs.

According to a report in MEED magazine that covers among others construction projects in the region, contracts worth billions of dollars will be re-issued in Kuwait, as a result of long delays and high inflation that have pushed companies to refuse to implement the projects undertaken.

Delays in project implementation due to the previous economic crisis that held up budget approvals for over three years from the bidding to awarding phase of the project, as well as prevailing political stalemate, and the stoppage or slowdown of work for over a year during the COVID-19 crisis, have all contributed to construct cost hikes.

One the projects came up to the awarding phase, many contracting companies that won the bid to implement the project are said to be refusing to sign the contracts. The contractors point out that prices they initially quoted are no longer valid due to inflation and delays that were not of their making. This could lead to a wave of project cancellations, and resubmissions of tenders, unless the government chooses to increase the budgets as proposed by the contractors.

A contractor who won the bid for one infrastructure project noted, "It took three years for the authorities to award the contract to us, so when they approached us to sign the contract, we refused as it was no longer possible to implement the project at the price we offered when submitting the bid."

Supply chain bottlenecks due to the pandemic have also led to project delays. For example, according to MEED, in April this year, Tangshan, the center of China's steel industry which is responsible for 13 percent of China's

steel production, introduced lockdowns in some areas. The Russo-Ukrainian war has also caused problems for Kuwaiti contractors looking to buy steel. The Azov-Stal Iron and Steel Plants, located in Mariupol in eastern Ukraine, which was one of the largest iron plants of its kind in Europe, was destroyed earlier this year from the ongoing conflict. The war in Ukraine has also affected shipping costs globally, as the price of freight has more than quadrupled since June 2020 until now.

"Due to inflation, it is impossible to use the same prices that were approved in 2019, and this affects many local and international contractors working in Kuwait," said an executive at a Kuwait-based contracting company.

Projects are likely to be further delayed if the government decides to re-tender them, as the re-bidding process itself could take an inordinate length of time, in particular because of prevailing political problems. The MEED report noted that the current absence of government means that no significant decisions will be made regarding large or small infrastructure projects any time soon.

State-owned companies responsible for infrastructure projects also cannot make any decisions and the only contracts that are likely to progress naturally are those for maintenance and those that are considered emergencies.



Heroic tales of the invasion



Mr H S Vedi greeting the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al Al Ahmed during his visit to India as president A P J Abdul Kalam looks on

The Times Kuwait Report

As the marauding Iraqi occupiers ransacked Kuwait following the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, many distressed Indian expatriates looked to the Indian Citizens Committee (ICC) for assistance, security and protection. In the absence of any semblance of law and order, and scant Indian government representation in the country, the ICC was formed within a week of the invasion and took the initiative to assist the vast Indian community and help them cope with the crisis by providing food, shelter, and means of communication. It was a mammoth responsibility that the members of ICC took on, often at risk to their own lives.

The ICC comprised 51 members, of whom five were selected to form the executive committee, with the late H.S. Vedi serving as Convenor and Secretary of Coordination. Most of the organization's members left Kuwait within the month of August. Eight members, Narinder Singh Sethi, N.V.K. Warriar, Roy Abraham, Thomas Chandy, K.K. Nair, Ali Hussain, M. Matthews and Vedi stayed on until substantial numbers of the Indian community were evacuated over the next several months.

The ICC's major success was, in coordination with the Indian embassy and government, to safely repatriate, by land, sea and air, over 143,000 Indians by the middle of November, sometimes evacuating up to 5,000 per day. The logistics of such an operation was staggering, and India's

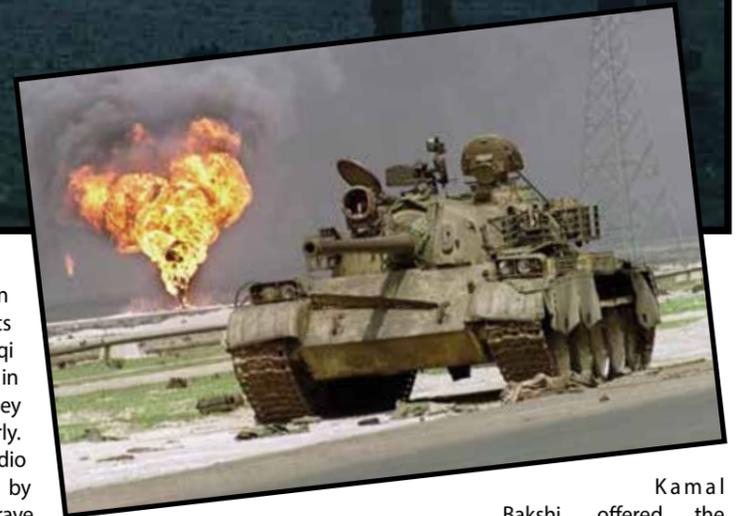
national airline, Air India, in particular, did a sterling job, especially considering that they did not have an office or agent in Jordan. Over a span of a little over two months from August to October 1990, in a record time, the national carrier airlifted, free of charge over 150,000 people from Amman in Jordan to Mumbai, India.

In the meantime, the Salmiya Indian School served as a base, providing food, shelter, and medical assistance to the needy. Matthews, Abraham, and Nair left on 18 October. Exactly one month later, Chandy, Hussain, and Warriar departed Kuwait. Only two members, Sethi and Vedi, remained of the original 51. To help them, five new members, Indira Sharma, N.V. Madhavan, Mathew Kuruvilla, Damodaran Sharma, and Prakash Shaw were inducted into the ICC, keeping the organization going during the particularly arduous months just prior to and post Kuwait's liberation. Indira Sharma, the then headmistress of Indian School, transformed the basement of the Salmiya Indian School into a hideout, and prepared food for the many homeless and destitute who relied on the school for shelter. Madhavan, the then head of the microbiology department at Jahra Hospital, treated Indians suffering from various ailments to the best of

his ability. He even monitored patients admitted into Iraqi controlled hospitals in Kuwait, for fear that they were being treated poorly.

Shaji, a ham radio operator, assisted by Kuruvilla, ignored the grave dangers involved in such a venture and used the Indian Ambassador's car to smuggle his equipment into the school. The radio was vital as now committee members could contact Delhi to keep them abreast of events in Kuwait and to receive instructions. The equipment also helped Indians, who either chose to stay in the country or were simply unable to leave, with a means to communicate with their worried families back in India.

On several occasions, ICC members, at the risk of being thrown in prison, beaten up, or even shot, intervened when Iraqi soldiers looted apartments still inhabited by Indians. The bravery of these committee members was indeed remarkable, considering that they were ordinary civilians, and the situation was as foreign and terrifying to them as it was to the people, cowering in fear of the soldiers' Kalashnikovs and AK 47s, whom they were helping. ICC members also successfully resisted at gunpoint, attempts by Iraqi officers and soldiers to confiscate buses and cars on the Indian School premises that were being used to ferry Indians from Kuwait as part of the evacuation process, even though Saddam Hussein had declared these vehicles state property. Myriad other more prosaic, yet equally important tasks had to be performed by the ICC members, including helping with the collection, storage and distribution of food sent by the Indian government under the aegis of the International Red Cross (IRC), which was then provided to the Indian, Vietnamese, Soviet, Bulgarian,



SriLanka and Filipino communities still remaining in Kuwait.

The ICC also kept tabs on Indians arrested by Iraqi authorities and whisked off to Iraqi prisons, and through close contact with the Indian Ambassador in Baghdad, H.E.

Kamal Bakshi, offered the prisoners what assistance they could. An example is the actions of Ali Shabeer who risked arrest to plead with Iraqi courts for the release of two Indian nationals, illegally arrested and imprisoned in Iraqi jail.

Despite the ICC's stellar work during the crisis their responsibilities did not end with the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991 by the allied forces. In conjunction with the Kuwait Red Crescent and the US Task Force for Civil Affairs, the ICC ensured Indians did not go without food. George Z. Padar, a US Army colonel, in a congratulatory letter to the committee commended the ICC for their "caring, selfless attitude," and "the efficient distribution of donated food to numerous needy members of the community."

Another major ICC humanitarian effort was the allocation of buses and drivers to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to transport almost 3,000 refugees from the Abdaly border to the Kuwait International Airport. The committee also provided transport for volunteer medical personnel to the Handicapped Children's Hospital. In a letter to the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, the IOM expressed their gratitude to the ICC "for their altruistic efforts without which this humanitarian resettlement of refugees would not have been possible. Similarly, the continuing support to the Handicapped Children's Hospital has been of inestimable value in providing timely and critical care for the hundreds of malnourished and neglected children at the hospital".

In a personal note of gratitude to Mr. Vedi, the then Chief of the IOM Division for Asia and Oceania, D.G. Whittlesey wrote: "I want to thank you and all the members of your committee for everything you did to make possible the first IOM flights from Kuwait City. It was quite an effort and a great success!" Even three decades on, the actions of the Indian Citizens Committee, in the months during and after the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, remain inspirational. The committee member's response to the crisis is a reflection of their courage, integrity and unquenchable reserves of dignity and spirit. Their service to the Indian Community is well appreciated.



The INVASION as they remember it...

The Times Kuwait Report

At 5am on 2 August, 1990, M. Mathews was shaken from his slumber by the shrill insistent peals of the doorbell and loud banging on his front door. Still bleary with sleep, Mathews answered the door and was faced with men in military uniforms asking him for water. Taken aback, he asked them who they were. The answer was a jarring shock, as he heard of the invasion of Kuwait directly, so to speak, from the horse's mouth. The day before, he had seen the pictures on Kuwait TV of a grim looking Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah returning from the futile talks in Saudi Arabia. Mathews knew that the situation was serious, but he had no inkling that it would take such a nasty turn. At the time, his residence was close to the American Embassy, which was then adjacent to Dasman Palace, the official residence of the Amir, being bombed by the Iraqis. It brought home to him the full extent of the danger and the perilousness of the situation. Mathews, a respected and eminent member of the Indian community and a long-time resident in Kuwait, felt a strong sense of responsibility to the

community. He considered it his duty to assist fellow Indian expatriates during the crisis. A few days after the invasion he moved into a friend's home in Salmiya, and until his departure in mid October of 1990, played a leading role in the Indian Citizens Committee (ICC) that had been formed to provide succor and shelter to Indians in need of assistance.

The role of ICC in helping Indians during the invasion has been appreciated widely. Besides providing food and shelter to the hundreds of Indians impacted by the invasion, including accommodating those displaced from border camps in the homes of volunteers, the committee played a stellar role in organizing the mass evacuation of Indians out of Kuwait. Mathews, who sadly passed away in 2017, in an interview with The Times Kuwait several years ago, poignantly recalled those dark days and months of the invasion. People drove down to the food warehouses of leading Indian trading-house, Zahem and Malhotra, to collect food distributed by the company. The national bakeries, which remarkably still functioned, were also a vital source of the Arabic bread, kuboos.

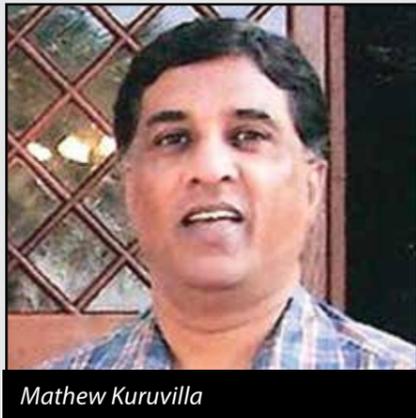
An unforgettable experience

The Times Kuwait Report

The months just prior to Kuwait's liberation in February 1991 were particularly tense. The mass exodus of people out of the country meant that many apartment buildings and private residences were rich pickings for plundering Iraqi troops. For those Indians still living in Kuwait, either through choice or circumstances, the sight of heavily armed soldiers indiscriminately looting uninhabited flats remains one of the more traumatic memories. The late Mathew Kuruvilla was one of those Indians who remained in Kuwait. A key member of the Indian Citizens Committee (ICC), he had to deal with many perilous situations. One of the more unusual and dangerous ones involved a frantic 2am phone call from three frightened women, who were cowering in front of marauding Iraqi soldiers armed with AK 47s.

Woken by the incessant sound of his phone ringing at 2am, Kuruvilla picked up the receiver and heard the voice of Leelamma, an acquaintance and a nurse at Sabah Hospital, screaming hysterically for help. Through her panicky words, he managed to understand that Iraqi soldiers were shooting at her door and trying to get into the apartment. The only other people in the flat, she said, were her sister and her teenage daughter. Kuruvilla asked Leelamma her phone number and address, and aware of the gravity of the situation, decided to quickly drive down to her place. His brother implored him not to risk his life by driving out there at that time of night, but Mathew felt it was his duty to help this woman, so he drove to her place immediately. On arriving he found the scene was absolute pandemonium. Leelamma's cousin, who was living a few buildings away but was too scared to come to her aid, had advised her to call Kuruvilla. On seeing Kuruvilla's car, the cousin came out of his building and led him to the soldiers.

At great risk to his own life, Kuruvilla posed as an official of the Indian Embassy and told the soldiers that he personally

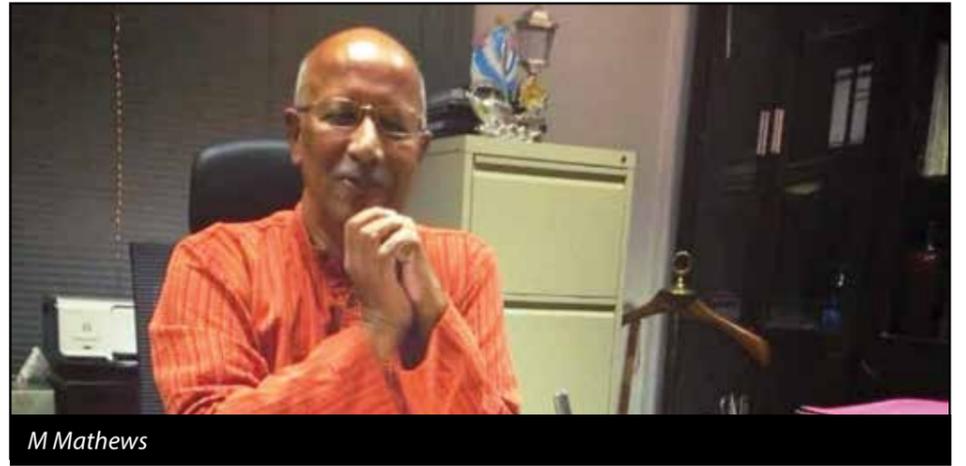


Mathew Kuruvilla

knew the women, and requested that they should not be harassed any further. The soldiers replied that all they wanted to know was who owned the car parked outside. Mathew then went up to the flat to try and calm the women down. They had obviously been through an ordeal and Leelamma asked Mathew to ensure that they were not harmed and that their apartment and cars were not looted. He went back to the soldiers with the car keys and said the vehicle belonged to the women and that they were nurses at Sabah Hospital.

Continuing to pose as an embassy official, he requested the soldiers not to move the car, enter the apartment or bother the women anymore. Convinced and mollified by Kuruvilla's smooth talking, the soldiers assured him that Leelamma, her sister and daughter, and their possessions would be safe.

Kuruvilla recalls that after the soldiers had given him their word, they coolly continued ransacking and looting the surrounding empty apartments but left Leelamma alone. The irony of the soldiers' actions, on one hand keeping their promise and on the other thieving and looting, did not escape him. The courage of Kuruvilla, especially as he was an unarmed civilian untrained in the handling of such situations, displayed that night is a rare commodity. His bravery and quick thinking saved three lives.



M Mathews

However, the most emotionally taxing task that the committee had to perform was to bury the dead bodies of Indian expatriates or arrange for their bodies to be repatriated home. Pensively, Mathews noted that in those days of panic, tragedy was an inevitable consequence. He recalls a particularly poignant story of an entire family killed in an accident on their way to safety in India.

Those were tense times. People were panicking, many insisted on leaving only by sea. This was impossible as the demand far outweighed the capacities of the vessels permitted to ship people back to India. Communications were a major problem. The ICC showed great ingenuity and courage to circumvent that particular obstacle. A ham radio was acquired, and moved around in order to avoid detection by the Iraqi army. Through this radio, people maintained contact with the authorities in India. Mathews had his own troubles too. A group of Iraqi soldiers robbed him at gunpoint of all his personal belongings, and he also suffered financial losses to his business, but those incidents only left him all the more grateful for the most precious thing he still possessed, his life. On 18 October, after a substantial number of Indians had been evacuated, Mathews decided

to leave Kuwait. He had no second thoughts on his decision, he was one of only eight among the original 51 members of the ICC still in the country.

Once back in India, Mathews focused his energies on his business interests in Dubai. Fortunately, he was financially well off, and the losses sustained in Kuwait did not affect him as hard as it did most other people. He returned to Kuwait in June 1991, three months after the liberation. That visit was only a short stay of three days, but before long he was back to stay. The Iraqi invasion was, for Mathews, ample proof of life's unpredictability, and to never take it for granted. While he has no fond memories of the invasion, Mathews said he did have fond memories of the valiant stand taken by the Indian community in the face of adversity, and in particular the unity shown between all the sections of the Indian population in Kuwait. While he regretted some of the knee-jerk decisions taken during that time, and added that if he had to do it over again, he would strive to be more organized. Mathew's fervent hope was that the Indian community retains that sense of unity, the belief that in a foreign country regional differences mean nothing and all Indians are the same.

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French Ambassador denies irregularities at visa center

Amid allegations of irregularities in the issuance of French visas at the accredited visa service center, Capago, French Ambassador H.E. Claire Le Flecher held a press conference along with the head of Capago for Kuwait, Rida El Hasnaoui.

The ambassador began by stressing that French Embassy officials have zero-tolerance towards abuse of power at the visa service center, and assured applicants that the embassy takes into consideration reports and allegations against services seriously and will take appropriate actions against offenders anywhere in the world. She also noted that following the rumors, embassy officials along with Capago staff conducted a thorough investigation of all allegations.

She added that thankfully, the evaluation process did not find evidence of any wrongdoing which could have originated from embassy services or from its visa center. However, the examination did identify possible weaker points in the system which could be exploited by private operators, especially as to obtaining visa appointments, and that steps were being taken to close these loopholes.

Noting that the rumors were all traced to second-hand information and malicious attempts to discredit the service center and



the embassy, the ambassador added that these rumors could have arisen due to the heavy rush of visa applicants this summer, and subsequent delays in visa appointments. Providing statistics on the visa applications, the envoy said, "The daily rate of applications has gone up from 200 to 300 a day, and from April to June the number of handled applications has increased from 3000 to 6000 a month. As a whole in three months from April to June, 13 000 applications

were processed, compared with 2 400 in the same period in 2021."

She also pointed out that some categories of visa applicants are fully exempted from booking an appointment and can go directly to the visa center without it. This includes holders of diplomatic passports; military personnel on official missions; people traveling for medical reasons with a certificate; students; as well as spouses and children of French citizens.

She also added that the embassy has initiated several steps in order to avoid the problems associated with visa applications, including that prepayment of a visa appointment will from now on have to be made at the time of booking it electronically, in order to validate it. Also, canceled appointments will as from now not result in immediate and automatic opening of new appointment slots using the freed capacity. In addition, new slots will henceforth be opened over a period of six

months, so as to incentivise a maximum number of travelers to send in their visa applications as early as possible.

Moreover, as a precautionary step to prevent any abuse of the system, the visa center is also planning on denying entry of private intermediaries to its premises, and making it mandatory for visa applicants to appear in person to the visa center in future. The ambassador warned, "Should these measures appear still insufficient to eradicate fraud, other stricter ones might be considered, such as overall prohibition of the recourse to intermediaries. However, the ambassador hoped it would not come to such a situation and that intermediaries had been warned not to indulge in such fraud practices, which could lead to their blacklisting."

Invasion scars and essence of freedom

Freedom does not come Free

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For them, every 2 August serves as a reminder that freedom is a priceless commodity and that its availability and continuity cannot, and should not, be taken for granted. Each anniversary of the invasion is a cue that freedom is not 'free', and the price to protect, preserve and continue enjoying the fruits of freedom, is constant and unwavering vigilance. The country and people who lived through the invasion have a moral duty to ensure that the new generation are made fully aware that everlasting vigilance is the essence of sustaining freedom.

This watchfulness should not only be directed against threats to freedom from beyond our borders but also against internal encroachments on our freedom. These intrusions, which often begin as subtle, indiscernible biases and bigotries on the freedoms and human rights of others, often go unnoticed or overlooked by most citizens who fail to flag them as rights violations that deserve to be condemned.

Nevertheless, these small discriminatory practices by a few build up, and over time they become everyday occurrence that lead to people becoming immunized to such discriminations and ignoring these inequities. But failing to acknowledge and protest these violations leads to the grinding and eroding of the moral fiber of a nation, and eventually it will lead to a situation where we wake up one day and realize that along with those whose freedoms we failed to protect, we too have lost our freedoms.

Apart from teaching a new generation on the need to be eternally watchful against both external and internal threats to liberty, we also have to inculcate in them the need to uphold as sacrosanct the civil and human rights of all people living in the country. Sustaining and perpetuating real freedom for Kuwait can only come about when we take responsibility to ensure that the rights of everyone is protected at all times. A country, and by extension its people, is judged not just by the level of liberty

that its citizens enjoy, but also by the freedom it grants to others residing in their midst. It is judged as much by the actions it takes, as by what it fails to take, to safeguard the rights and liberties of everyone.

Freedom, which is the most fundamental of human rights and a basic component of human dignity, should not be considered a privilege granted to a select few, it should be a right imparted to all people in the country, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. Under the prevailing socio-political environment, it is not surprising that Kuwait attained a score of only 37 out of a possible 100, in the 2022 Freedom in the World index. Compiled and published annually by Freedom House — the US-based organization that advocates democracy, political freedom, and human rights worldwide.

Freedom in the World index rates people's access among other things, civil liberties in 210 countries and territories worldwide. In the 2022 edition of the index, Kuwait scored 23, out of 60 in civil liberties. A caveat to be added here is that the index evaluates access to civil liberties granted not just to citizens, but to all people in a country. Clearly, there is a need to rethink and redefine the concept of freedom, and its applicability and availability to everyone in Kuwait.

However, by its very nature, a discourse on freedom is complex, as it is a relative term that could mean different things to different people at different times. For want of clarity in this regard, let us generalize and say that freedom is the right to do, think, believe, speak, worship, gather, or act as one pleases, as long as these choices do not infringe on the freedom of other people. Irrespective of how it is defined and understood, one essential attribute of freedom is that it has to be extended to others. Without freedom being extended to everyone, all the gains we make as individuals, as a nation, will eventually wither and wilt.

The need to ensure freedom for all people is also a point on which modern scholars and

social analysts concur. Freedom, they note, confers on people the right to do something, as well as the right not to do something. Both sides are important because together they give people the ability to choose how they want to live their lives. Choice is an indispensable component of freedom, as it not only allows you to do what you want to do, or decide where and how you live and work, but also on how you choose to treat others.

The choice of how we treat others is important as it leads to whether we end up discriminating against someone unlike us, or treating them with dignity and equality worthy of another human being. When we choose to discriminate against someone, we take away their right to self-determination and what it means for them to be individual humans. Non-discrimination among people is what promotes tolerance of different cultures, religions and ethnicities that live in a country, even though they may not share cultural or lifestyle habits.

Protecting and preserving the freedom of everyone promotes unity of all people on the land, and this unity is undeniably vital to help prevent external and internal intrusions. The second of August each year drives home this point. Wedged between two powerful countries, Kuwait has had border disputes with its larger neighbors over the centuries. Prior to the invasion of 2 August 1990, Kuwait and Iraq had shelved their decades-old border dispute, as Iraq engaged in a devastating war with Iran in the 1980s. In this war, Kuwait remained an ally of Iraq, providing moral and material support in the form of financial loans for Iraq's military purchases.

With the end of the war in 1988, an economically drained Iraq, burdened by humongous debt from its eight-year war, demanded that Kuwait write-off the loans and provide more financial assistance. When Kuwait understandably refused to comply, Iraq launched a ground and air invasion under the unfounded pretext that Kuwait had

for years been using its technically superior drilling techniques to expropriate Iraqi oil from its border areas, and demanding due compensation.

The rapid onslaught by the invading troops on 2 August took Kuwait by surprise and the country was overrun, annexed and soon proclaimed as the 19th province of Iraq within a week of the invasion. However, Kuwait's strong standing and influence in the global arena helped the country muster a swift condemnation by the international community. Less than four days after the invasion the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. It also imposed a string of stringent embargoes against Iraq, thereby curtailing Baghdad's ability to sustain its economy and maintain its occupation of Kuwait.

In late November of 1990, following Iraq's refusal to heed repeated UN warnings to roll back its invasion, the UNSC authorized the use of "all necessary means" to force Iraq out of Kuwait, if its troops did not withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January, 1991. By mid-January, when Iraq failed to comply with the UN ultimatum, and it was apparent that it had no intention of retreating from Kuwait, an UN-Coalition force led by the United States launched Operation Desert Storm on 17 January, 1991.

The offensive began with a 'shock and awe' aerial bombardment campaign that targeted and devastated Iraqi defenses. The six-week long Desert Storm ended with a 100-hour ground offensive that led to the liberation of Kuwait on the morning of 26 February, 1991. The war, waged at immense cost, resulted in extensive damage to military and civilian infrastructure in Iraq and tens of thousands of casualties, again, largely on the Iraqi side.

Kuwait is once again a free nation. However, to preserve the freedom we once lost, but gratefully regained, we need to be eternally watchful of both external and internal aggressions on our freedom.

Universal Basic Income helps tide over crises



Tavneet Suri and Nidhi Parekh

Tavneet Suri is Professor of Applied Economics at MIT.

Nidhi Parekh is a project director at the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL).

When the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting recession pushed 120 million people worldwide into extreme poverty in 2020, many countries relied on social-protection measures to cushion the blow. By May 2021, a total of 3,333 such schemes had been planned or implemented in 222 countries or territories.

Because the world will face other crises in the coming decades, we must learn how to protect people better against unexpected events – particularly as the effects of climate change become more pronounced and leave many exposed to natural disasters and income shocks. But how?

Social-protection programs that assist low-income families, insure against shocks, and break poverty traps offer a potential solution. But targeted cash transfers, the most prevalent scheme, might not address supply-side barriers such as shortages of food and other essential goods, particularly during crises. So, can any type of cash transfers mitigate the impact of large shocks? Do crises require new social-protection measures, or can existing policies boost resilience?

An increasingly popular and much-debated form of social protection is a universal basic income (UBI): an unconditional cash transfer that is large enough to meet individuals' basic needs and is delivered to everyone within a community. While the UBI idea is not new, it has recently been gaining traction globally, with pilot programs launched in countries including Finland, India, and the United States.

The concept builds on decades of evidence concerning the impact of cash transfers. For example, contrary to popular opinion, studies show that cash transfers reduce spending on 'temptation goods' like alcohol and tobacco, do not discourage work, and have a wide range of positive effects.

But a lack of accurate, dynamic data makes it difficult to direct cash transfers to those most in need. Targeting individuals rather than households is even more complicated, because poor individuals often live in non-poor households.

A UBI could circumvent these issues, because it is not only universal but also can be provided to individuals rather than households. Furthermore, a UBI could help soften the blow of unexpected shocks that might leave some segments of the population vulnerable and in need of government support – although whether it could do so cost-effectively has yet to be determined.

In 2017, a team of researchers – Abhijit Banerjee, Michael Faye, Alan Krueger, Paul Niehaus, and one of us (Suri) – in collaboration with Innovations for Poverty Action and GiveDirectly, began a randomized evaluation in Kenya to test the effect of a digitally transferred UBI. The team focused on two low-income counties, Siaya and Bomet, and



“ An increasingly popular and much-debated form of social protection is a universal basic income (UBI): an unconditional cash transfer that is large enough to meet individuals' basic needs and is delivered to everyone within a community ”

evaluated three distinct UBI designs: a large lump sum, equivalent to approximately \$500 (the 'lump-sum arm'); a payment of \$0.75 per day for two years, equivalent to about \$500 (the 'short-term arm'); and a payment of \$0.75 per day for 12 years (the 'long-term arm'). Payments were made to each adult over the age of 18 in the assigned villages.

When the pandemic hit Kenya in 2020, the team quickly realized that they needed to understand whether this UBI was helping people weather the crisis. So, with funding from J-PAL Africa's Digital Identification and Finance Initiative, they conducted phone surveys of the households participating in the program. By this point, the lump-sum and short-term arms were complete; the long-term arm was ongoing.

The team found that the UBI improved households' food security and physical and mental health, relative to the comparison group of households that did not receive the transfer. UBI recipients also reduced their social interactions, possibly because of the pandemic and perhaps because they did not need to rely on friends and relatives as much during the hungry season (though this is speculative at best). This may have lessened the burden on local public-health systems as UBI recipients were less likely to fall ill.

Hunger was widespread in the two counties the team studied. But whereas 68 percent of people in the comparison group reported experiencing hunger in the past 30 days, UBI recipients were 5-11 percentage points less likely to do so. This effect was significantly larger for people in the long-term arm, who expected to continue receiving transfers.

UBI recipients were also 4-6 percentage points less likely to report that a household member had been sick during the past 30 days, as compared to 44% in the comparison group. And while 29 percent of people in the comparison group had recently sought medical attention at a hospital, UBI beneficiaries were 3-5 percentage points less likely to do so, because they were less likely to be sick.

The researchers also saw how more income can lead people to take greater risks. Before

the pandemic, new businesses established by some UBI recipients posted large increases in profits. But such risk-taking does not always pay off. Although these enterprises largely remained open during the COVID-19 crisis, earnings declined to levels similar to those in the comparison group.

This decrease in income for UBI beneficiaries during the pandemic was not a failure of UBI. The grant is designed to maintain a minimum standard of living and, by providing a form of insurance, may encourage recipients to take more risks. But in a crisis of the magnitude of the pandemic, policymakers should also consider protecting incomes (as some high-income countries did).

The onset of the pandemic in Kenya coincided with the agricultural off (or lean) season, when hunger and illness typically increase, and income declines. Although the study could not isolate the pandemic's effects from these seasonal trends, the evidence highlights the importance of access to cash transfers and other income supplements during crises, particularly to reduce hunger and illness. Policymakers and businesses in poorer countries should therefore consider building cash-transfer systems that can be activated at short notice to deliver additional funds to a large number of people, if not everyone, in response to unanticipated shocks.

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Environmental Tariffs Could Be a Game Changer



Daron Acemoglu

Professor of Economics at MIT, is co-author (with James A. Robinson) of *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty and The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty*.

Environmental tariffs may be humanity's last hope for mitigating climate change, which is on course to become increasingly devastating if we do not curb our greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions.

The most straightforward way to confront this unprecedented global threat is through a multilateral agreement that locks in a 'green transition' in all (or most) countries. The key is to boost renewable-energy production while significantly reducing fossil-fuel consumption, a process that calls for coordinated policies on three fronts: regulation, subsidies for cleaner technologies (including renewables), and carbon taxes.

Unfortunately, this type of global agreement seems out of reach, both because the fossil-fuel industry remains politically powerful, and because some of the world's biggest emitters, including the United States, China, and India, are not adopting the necessary policies.

Although regulation and subsidies are essential to achieve an effective energy transition, the carbon tax is the bedrock, because that is what will increase the costs of emitting carbon dioxide, methane, and other GHGs. Several countries have already adopted such taxes, including Sweden, which has the world's highest carbon tax (approximately \$117 per ton). But many others, including the US and China, have not followed suit.

This lack of consistency gives rise to 'carbon leakage'. High-emissions activities tend to move away from countries with carbon taxes to those without. While a country that unilaterally adopts a higher carbon tax benefits everyone (by reducing its own GHG emissions), it also unwittingly encourages others to do less. Or, as an economist would put it, one should expect that unilateral climate-mitigation policies function as 'strategic substitutes' across countries: The higher one country's carbon tax, the less other countries will do for mitigation. A high carbon tax creates an opportunity for 'carbon arbitrage'. Since the steel industry emits 1.85 tons of carbon for every ton of steel produced, Sweden's carbon tax increases the cost of its steel production by about \$210 per ton, which in turn makes Chinese steel imports much more attractive for steel-users and their customers.

Worse, Chinese authorities have an incentive to maintain this arrangement. Without a Chinese carbon tax, Chinese steel exports will thrive, and that will help Chinese industry, workers, and politicians (who can claim credit for generating an economic boom). Even if they recognize the need to



“ Standing in the way of aggressive environmental tariffs are excuses and misleading arguments. The fossil-fuel industry and major polluters, including China, are against environmental tariffs and are campaigning aggressively to block them ”

combat climate change, Chinese authorities may end up doing less than they might have done without Sweden's carbon tax.

Hence the need for environmental tariffs, which would reverse this logic by imposing a carbon tax on imports. Sweden would apply a border tax adjustment equivalent to the difference between its carbon tax and the carbon tax of the exporting country, multiplied by the tonnage of the CO2 emissions generated in the production of the imported products.

An environmental tariff's most obvious benefit is that it reduces carbon leakage. By nullifying the artificial cost advantage of imports from low-carbon-tax countries, it encourages steel consumption to shift toward cleaner domestic sources or less-polluting exporters.

But an environmental tariff's indirect effects may be even more important. Most importantly, a tariff makes climate-change mitigation policies 'strategic complements' rather than strategic substitutes; this means that Swedish carbon taxes will encourage, rather than discourage, other countries to adopt similar policies of their own.

The logic is simple. Without environmental tariffs, Sweden's carbon tax gives Chinese steel producers an arbitrage opportunity.

But once more countries have begun to apply border adjustments on imports, the Chinese authorities will want to help China's steel exporters clean up their operations. Regardless of whether they do this through carbon taxes, regulations, or subsidies for clean energy, Chinese CO2 emissions will decline. And once Chinese producers start meaningfully reducing their emissions, China's authorities will have an incentive to introduce environmental tariffs of their own.

For the most part, what is standing in the way of aggressive environmental tariffs are excuses and misleading arguments. The fossil-fuel industry and major polluters, including China, are dead set against environmental tariffs and have been campaigning aggressively to block them. But this position is wholly selfish and thus should be disregarded.

A second argument is that environmental tariffs are protectionist measures, and that we should not 'risk giving protectionists another opening', as *The Economist* puts it. This claim does not hold water. Because carbon tariffs level the playing field, they do not function like traditional protectionist measures. Moreover, the classic theory of trade does not imply that arbitraging domestic policies produces welfare gains — especially considering that such policies are essential for combating

climate change.

A third objection is that environmental tariffs may not be legal under World Trade Organization rules. In fact, a straightforward reading of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) suggests that they are indeed legal. Article III allows for environmental taxes, stating that "[imported products] shall not be subject, directly or indirectly, to internal taxes or other internal charges of any kind in excess of those applied, directly or indirectly, to like domestic products." It follows that if a country has a domestic carbon tax on 'like domestic products', it is permitted to apply the same tax to imports through border adjustments.

This rule has long provided the basis for border adjustments on value-added taxes, and it was also the reasoning behind a GATT panel's 1987 ruling (in *United States – Taxes on Petroleum and Certain Important Substances*) that border tax adjustments could be applied to chemicals. Furthermore, Article XX of the GATT provides additional exemptions for trade restrictions "necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health," and there is now a strong scientific case that carbon taxes meet that criteria. Finally, some commentators worry that in a 'liberal international order', important global policy decisions should be pursued primarily through multilateral cooperation. That may well be true. But the fact is that multilateral agreements are not going to work fast enough to keep the world anywhere close to the Paris climate agreement's 1.5° Celsius warming pathway. We cannot allow faith in multilateralism to become an alibi for inaction. Environmental tariffs could create a positive cascade of climate-mitigation policies around the world. There should be no delay in implementing them.

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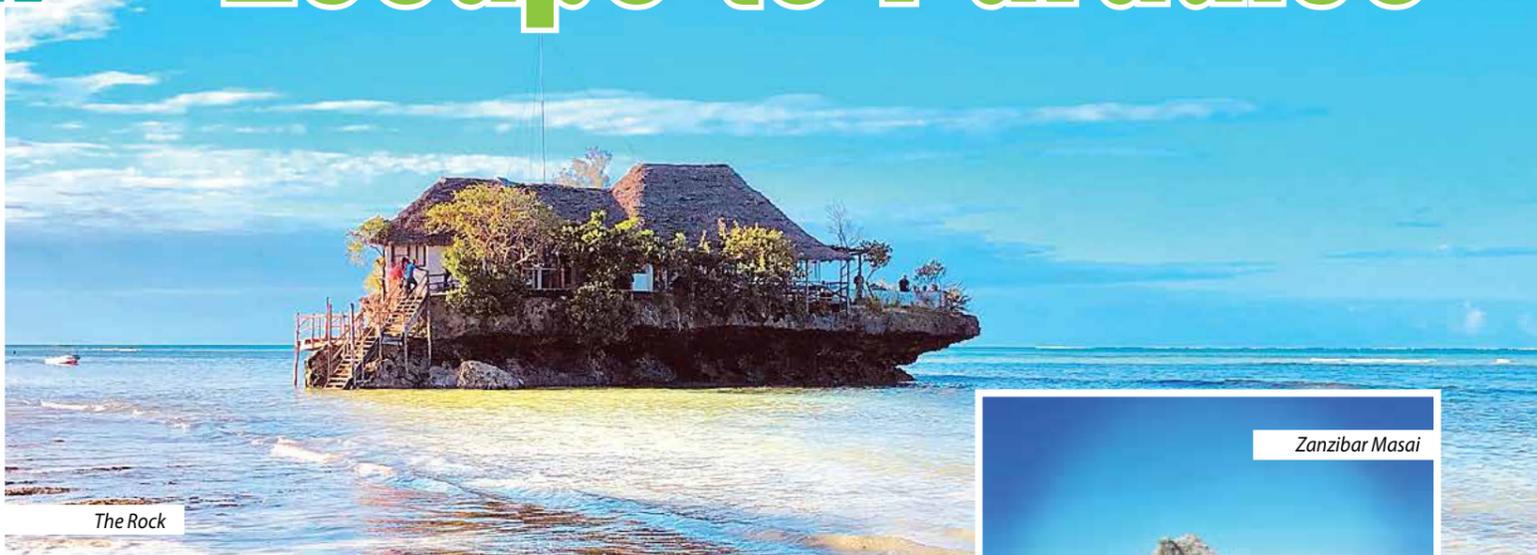
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Zanzibar – Escape to Paradise

By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

Surrounded by magnificent beaches with long strips of soft white sand, clear blue sea, and warm weather throughout the year, it is surprising that Zanzibar continues to remain one of Africa's hidden secrets.

Strategically located in the Indian Ocean, its picture-perfect beaches and down-to-earth locals are just the tip of the iceberg: Zanzibar also has a rich culture and history that few know about. The island has over the centuries attracted people from all over, from the Omanis to the Arabs and eventually the Europeans — that brought with it vast amounts of trade opportunities, wealth, and a unique mix of cultures.



The Rock



Pwani Deluxe Garden with Ocean View

Culture and history lovers can easily step back in time and admire the European influences seen in Zanzibar's capital, Stone Town. The vibrant epicenter is bustling with life and is a great place to start your journey. You can easily spend an afternoon getting lost in the busy markets, surrounded by old winding walkways spotted with mosques and even one of the oldest churches in Africa. Stone Town is also a great place to delve into the island's rich history, bargain for some of its famous spices, and try the local street food.

Some of the best beaches can be found on the island's east coast, where waves break over coral reefs and offshore sand bars, and low tide reveals small pools of starfish, small minnows, and anemones. The tides are not so extreme, and you do not see the excess amounts of seaweed and sea urchins that you will find elsewhere. Up north, ocean swimming is much less susceptible to the tides, and smooth beaches and white sand can make for endless days in the sun. Nungwi and Kendwa are two locations worth visiting in the north for their beautiful beaches.

Nungwi is also home to all the huge luxury resorts such as the Rui and Zuri Hotels; however, discerning GCC travelers may also want to consider other hidden luxurious properties such as the five-star Neptune Pwani Beach Resort & Spa, which is situated on the north-east coast of Zanzibar, on the stunning Kiwengwa shoreline. The hotel is meters away from its own private beach, featuring magnificent, manicured gardens dotted with



Stone Town

dozens of palm trees and other African flora. Upon entering the property one is filled with peace and tranquility due to the stunning greenery and various native plants that envelop guests at every turn.

Neptune Pwani features 170 African-styled rooms set in traditionally styled bungalows furnished with designer furniture and technology for the global traveler who needs to always stay connected. Besides large deluxe garden rooms with partial ocean views and modern features, there are deluxe seaside rooms and beautiful master suites as well. The hotel will also be launching its private villas and butler service in 2023 for the larger GCC



family groups that choose to visit the hotel.

Another highlight of the property is the amazingly fresh seafood and dining options served at the three à la carte restaurants serving Indian, Italian and Thai cuisine, and its calming Earth and Rain Spa. Drawing on the earth's essential element to create balance, the spa focuses on reinventing wellness by creating a holistic experience that includes luxurious head-to-toe treatments such as scrubs and massages as well as regenerating baths, using the award-winning African natural line of Healing Earth Spa products among others.

Matemwe is another town known to be a chilled-out beachside area with a collection of boutique hotels. Unlike Nungwi with its huge resorts, few standalone restaurants, and no vast hotels exist here. It is much more chilled, laid back, and offers beautiful beach views. On the east side, the beaches here have enormous high and low tides. During low tide, the beach extends 500m to where the reef breaks. It is fascinating watching the waves come in and out twice a day and many can be seen enjoying this type of therapy.

Matemwe is also the launching point to visit the famous Mnemba Atoll, a private island off the coast of Zanzibar. This beautiful island is home to a protected marine park and endless scuba diving and snorkeling options. About 30 minutes by boat from the main island, that atoll offers crystal clear waters that are home to sea urchins, starfish, and dozens of fish and dolphins.

Regarding water sports, Paje is the place to visit for kitesurfing lovers. The

winds blow east to west here almost the entire year. Nearby towns like Jambiani, Bwejuu, and Michamvi are favorites for locals and tourists alike.

Travelling south will take you to some of the best dolphin-watching areas of Zanzibar. With much less crowds and tourists, it is here that one can quickly get up close and personal with wild dolphins that zip past the coastline. Adventure lovers can quickly dive in and enjoy swimming with troupes of dolphins that call this area home.

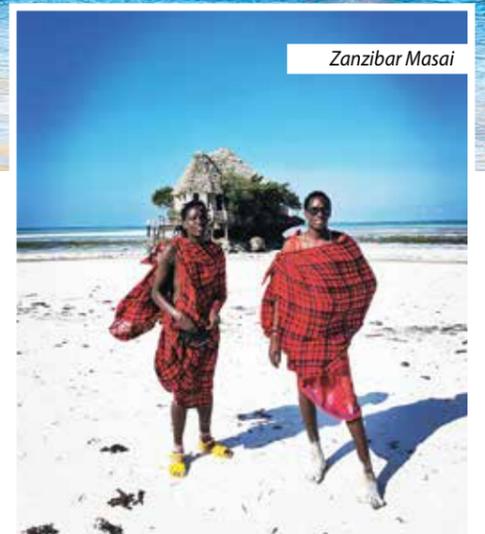
Honeymooners and couples looking for a quiet and secluded luxurious property need not look any further than the Co-Emirati owned Kizikula Hotel. Designed with a sustainable tourism outlook, the plastic-free property features modest bungalows amidst a forest of palm trees and luscious greenery. "We mostly get couples and honeymooners visiting our hotel as it is childfree and intimate.... we also have some of the best sunset views in Zanzibar and now that Fly Dubai and Qatar Airways fly directly, we are seeing more and more GCC guests visiting us," explains the Manager at Kizikula, Bashiru Kamote. The boutique hotel is designed to feel like a cozy home with open spaces to see other guests and just enough privacy to be inspired by the surrounding nature. Envisioned by Mumbai-based Case Design, the rooms are hi-tech, modern, and super comfy.

An unwavering commitment to the local flora and fauna and its resources runs through the entire space. Whether it be the gardens teeming with native trees or the pink coral limestone from the neighboring quarries, everything at Kizikula draws from the same materials of the island itself, which can be felt across the entire property, including its enclosed outdoor showers and floor to ceiling windows in each of its nine suites. Guests enjoy a set menu drawn from the hotel's on-site farm. Visitors can spend their days paddle boarding, snorkeling, and swimming with wild dolphins just 15 minutes from the hotel. As the south of the island is not so busy with tourists, the dolphins here seem to be more at ease with coming up close to visitors. Finish the day by taking in the beautiful sunsets easily enjoyed at the hotel's sea-facing pool and bar, as well as awe-inspiring starry nights from the spacious rooftops accessible from various suites.

And while you may choose Zanzibar as a relaxing or romantic getaway, some things are not to be missed. The most famous restaurant in Zanzibar, The Rock, once featured in



Kizikula



Zanzibar Masai

the New York Times, is just one of those places. Located on Zanzibar's southeast peninsula, the restaurant is on a floating rock island out in the sea and is home to stunning views over the ocean and fresh seafood.

During low tide, the water recedes away from the restaurant exposing the sand, coral, rocks, and seaweed. The water floods the sand during high tide, giving off a beautiful blue and turquoise color. During low tide, you can walk to the restaurant from the beach; however, during high tide, you will need to use the free canoe service to get to and from the restaurant.



Pwani Global View

Zanzibar is growing in popularity with GCC residents due to its relaxing island vibe and proximity to the Gulf. Now that international flights worldwide connect to Zanzibar Island, it is even easier to get there on short notice.

Emirates and Qatar Airways have direct flights, among other airlines, allowing travelers from Europe and America to visit easily. In addition, Ethiopian Airlines has direct flights from Addis Ababa to Zanzibar, allowing for easy international connections.

Also, from Tanzania, you can quickly reach Zanzibar by air from popular places like Kilimanjaro and Arusha. If you are staying deep in the Serengeti like Seronera, you can also take direct flights to Zanzibar.

Hermoine Macura-Noble



The first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US-based 501c3 charity – The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram, here.

As the World Burns



Richard Haass

*President of the Council on Foreign Relations and author of *The World: A Brief Introduction*.*

It is often said that no one wins a war, just that some lose less than others. Russia's war against Ukraine promises to be no exception. One clear loser is already evident: the planet.

The war has become the international priority for policymakers and the public. And rightly so: Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression against Ukraine threatens a pillar of international order, namely the prohibition on changing borders by force. But the war has also triggered a global scramble for sufficient supplies of energy in response to sanctions against Russian energy exports and the possibility that Russia will cut off supplies. Many countries have found that the easiest and quickest route is to secure greenhouse-gas-emitting fossil fuels.

But even before Putin launched his war, the battle against climate change was being lost. It has been hard to generate any sense of urgency about a problem widely viewed as real (denial of climate science is fading) but seen mostly as something that can be dealt with in the future. Record-high temperatures in Europe and elsewhere, droughts, wildfires, more severe storms, and increased migration may change this perception, but so far, they have not.

Moreover, any government acting alone will not solve the problem. There is thus a sense in many countries that doing the right thing will not matter, because others will continue to do the wrong thing, and all will suffer.

Then there is the related question, most often heard in the developing world: "Why should we do the right thing when we did not cause the problem?" Poor countries reject as a double standard being asked by wealthy countries — which industrialized at a time when climate considerations did not count for much and are responsible for far higher historical carbon emissions — to develop in a manner that denies them access to the cheapest form of energy. Adding to the problem is that several countries (Brazil in particular) are not doing what they can to prevent the destruction of rainforests, the earth's natural carbon sponge.

Speaking of double standards, international efforts to slow climate change are hampered by opposition to greater reliance on nuclear power, even though it releases no carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Since the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan, operating existing nuclear reactors or



building new, safer plants has become an uphill political battle.

Efforts to slow climate change still suffer from the perception that they must come at the expense of employment and economic growth. This is increasingly untrue: Climate change is proving to be costly, while introducing alternatives to fossil fuels can create jobs and reduce energy costs over time. But resistance to going down this path is intense, especially in areas that have long depended on the production of fossil fuels.

“ Earth's surface temperature is an estimated 1.1° Celsius above pre-industrial levels and will grow warmer because of previous activity, even if the world stopped emitting greenhouse gasses today, which it obviously will not

For all these reasons, international efforts to slow the pace of global warming have accomplished little. World leaders will convene again this November (in Egypt) for the next United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) but there is no reason to be optimistic that this meeting will accomplish much more than the 26 that preceded it.

The United States, traditionally a leader of international efforts to rein in climate change, is increasingly sidelined. Its previous president,

Donald Trump, withdrew the US from the 2015 Paris climate accord, while his successor, Joe Biden, is increasingly limited in what he can do because Congress (above all, its Republican members) will not subsidize development of alternative energy sources, and the Supreme Court has sharply curtailed the federal government's authority to regulate CO2 emissions. There is also little or no political support for taxing emissions or entering trade agreements that would discourage coal or oil consumption by placing tariffs on products that use them intensively.

The result is that Earth's surface temperature is an estimated 1.1° Celsius above pre-industrial levels and will grow warmer because of previous activity, even if the world stopped emitting greenhouse gasses today, which it obviously will not. On the contrary, our current trajectory leads to a much warmer climate, affecting ice sheets, rainforests, and tundra. In a virtuous cycle, good developments lead to better developments; when it comes to climate, the cycle is vicious: bad leads to worse.

Is there any cause for hope? There is, but for the most part not from governmental efforts, whether alone or in tandem. Political leaders are unlikely to act at a scale commensurate with the problem until it is too late.

One area of potential progress could come from corporations, which have financial incentives to introduce more fuel-efficient products. National and local governments can increase companies' stakes in doing so by enacting regulations that encourage investment in innovation.

A second area for positive change is adaptation. Governments can build infrastructure to help manage the effects of climate change, such as flooding, and financial institutions can use lending and insurance policies to discourage people from building homes in flood- or fire-prone areas.

The best hope of getting ahead of climate change may well come from technology, primarily those that enable us to stop or even reverse climate change, whether by removing some atmospheric carbon or by putting reflective particles in the atmosphere to reduce the amount of sunlight that reaches Earth. Developing such technologies needs to be a priority.

There is a recent precedent for such an effort: COVID-19. While the global death toll is somewhere between 15-18 million, what saved us from an even greater catastrophe was government and business coming together to develop a new generation of highly effective vaccines in record time. With climate change, too, we will have to rely more on physical science than political science to save us from ourselves.

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Regular exercise with healthy diet helps longevity

New studies show that regular exercises on their own do not add up to a longer life, you need to eat healthily as well. And, in a corollary to that, eating healthily without exercising also does not help in prolonging life.

Although there are numerous health benefits to eating a balanced diet or engaging in regular exercise independently, the study points out that to achieve maximum reduction in mortality risk, it is important to combine a healthy diet with regular exercise.

The new study, conducted by researchers at the University of Sydney in Australia and published recently in the British Journal of Sports Medicine show that a healthy diet cannot offset the effects of a sedentary lifestyle, just as regular exercise cannot counter the harms of a poor diet. The study notes that while exercise and a healthy diet can individually reduce your overall risk of mortality, the largest risk reduction comes from doing both.

The study revealed that those who exercised frequently and ate a well-balanced diet had the lowest risk of mortality, and that high levels of physical activity do not counteract the negative health effects of a poor diet. The findings highlight the importance of engaging in both a healthy diet and regular physical activity.

The scientists added that adhering to both, a quality diet and sufficient physical activity, is important for optimally reducing the risk of mortality from all causes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and obesity or overweight related cancers. Though many people may be aware that a healthy diet and regular exercises are beneficial to warding off CVD, not many will be aware that being overweight and having obesity are associated with some cancers.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has associated overweight and obesity with increased risk of 13 types of



cancers, including cancers that affect many of the vital tissues and organs such as the central nervous system, the kidney, liver, pancreas, thyroid, ovaries, intestine, blood plasma, and breast cancer among others

Findings of the study and its relevance are buttressed by the fact that it was extensive and extended over a decade. For their research, the scientists evaluated the health and exercise data of 346, 627 individuals over the course of 11 years.

They tracked how much exercise each participant completed in an average week along with how intense their physical activity was. The team also followed the eating habits of the participants. During the study period, a total of 13,869 participants died, of whom 2,650 succumbed to heart disease and 4,522 due to

obesity or overweight-related cancers.

Results from evaluating the diet revealed that while any type of regular exercise was associated with a lower risk of mortality, those who both ate well and exercised had the lowest risk of dying. In addition, the study found that although exercise and diet are independently linked to a lower risk of mortality, high levels of exercise cannot entirely mitigate the harms of a poor diet.

The findings of the study suggest that in order to minimize overall mortality risk, people need to eat a healthy diet as well as exercise regularly. The study also established that those who ate a poor-quality diet and were engaged in active exercising had substantially reduced mortality risk than those who ate a poor-quality diet and were inactive as well. However,

to maximize mortality risk, it is important to be doing both things right, said the researchers.

The study noted although health professionals always endorse adhering to both healthy diet and regular exercises, fast food and sports equipment vendors have been able to push through advertisements that aim to lure consumers into the wrong idea that 'by working out you could eat whatever you wanted', or that 'exercise outruns a bad diet'.

It has been widely proven that a range of chronic diseases could be prevented or contained by eating healthily and exercising regularly. Numerous studies have ascertained that being physically active can boost your brain health, reduce your risk of disease and strengthen your bones and muscles, and a healthy diet can increase your longevity, boost immunity, and lower your risk of chronic disease.

Diet and exercise are each critical to minimize the chance of death from cardiovascular disease and many cancers, and yet, because diet and exercise are closely interlinked, many people believe they can offset the effects of a poor diet by increasing the amount of exercise they engage in.

Also, while analyzing how physical activity mitigates the risks linked to a poor diet, the researchers noted that findings from previous studies suggests that intense exercise can offset the harms of eating poorly in the short term, but there was minimal data on the long-term effects. The scientists now intend to examine how diet and physical activity interact on long-term health outcomes.

The study concluded that while it is important to do at least one thing right — either exercise regularly or eat well — to lower the risk of mortality, diet and exercise together help lower the risk of death from cardiovascular disease and many forms of cancer.

Long Covid - Trail of COVID-19



Dr. Jibin John Thomas MD

Registrar, Internal Medicine
International Clinic, Farwaniya.

Long Covid is a term used to describe the effects of COVID-19 that continue for weeks or months beyond the initial illness. Covid symptoms may pass quickly, but some people are suffering long-term effects. A research study published by Imperial College London, based on half a million people in England, found two main categories of ongoing symptoms: a smaller group of people with respiratory symptoms, such as a cough or breathlessness, (this group was more likely to have had severe COVID-19 illness initially), and a larger group with a cluster of more general symptoms, particularly tiredness and fatigue.

Majority of people who were infected by COVID-19, whether mild or severe, were found to be prone to Long Covid.

Major Manifestations of Long Covid:

Tiredness or excessive fatigue, irritable cough, breathlessness, palpitation,



difficulty thinking or concentrating, smell and taste dysfunction, acute kidney injury, acute inflammation of pancreas, sleep disturbances, headache, dizziness, joint pain, diarrhea, and changes in menstrual cycle, are some of the major manifestations that can linger post COVID-19 Infection. As newer variants of COVID-19 emerge, newer

long-term illness can appear in the coming months.

Identifying Long Covid: There is no one single test to diagnose long Covid. It is a condition that is not fully understood yet. It is necessary to have post covid check up done 4 weeks post COVID-19 infection with your

specialist doctor, which may include blood routine, ECG, X ray and other investigations.

Some people, especially those who had severe COVID-19, experience multi-organ effects or autoimmune conditions with symptoms lasting weeks or months after COVID-19 illness. Multiorgan effects can involve many body systems, including the heart, lung, kidney, skin, and brain.

As a result of these effects, people who have had COVID-19 may be more likely to develop new health conditions such as diabetes, heart conditions, or neurological conditions compared with people who have not had COVID-19. It is important that research continues to explore post-COVID-19 syndrome in more detail.

Preventing Long Covid: One of the key ways to reduce the risk of long Covid is to get vaccinated. The vaccine not only reduces the risk of catching COVID-19, but there is also evidence that for those who do catch it, being vaccinated makes it less likely they will develop Long Covid.

Long Covid Treatment: Managing Long Covid needs proper assessment by a specialist doctor post COVID-19 infection. Most of the symptoms are treated symptomatically and can render good relief post treatment.



Last of Caracal chopper orders to arrive by December

French Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Claire Le Flecher said she expects Kuwait is to take delivery of the last four Caracal helicopters by the end of the year, said French Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Claire Le Flecher. The aircraft form part of the original order for 30 Caracal helicopters that Kuwait placed with European aircraft manufacturer, Airbus in 2016.

Kuwait's armed forces placed the order for 30 Airbus Caracal military helicopters from France, in a deal reported to be worth over US\$1 billion, in August 2016, with deliveries to begin early

in 2019. Kuwait armed forces have so far taken delivery of 26 Caracal helicopters that have been adapted and equipped to Kuwait's specification. The long-range H225M tactical transport helicopters that are meant for use by the Kuwait Army and National Guard, can each seat 28 troops in addition to crew.

On another note, while speaking to the media, the French ambassador also noted the decision to exempt Kuwaitis from the 'Schengen visa' was evidence of the trust, friendship and solid relations between the European Union

and Kuwait. She expressed her happiness at the announcement of this step during the French presidency of the European Union.

She added that the opening of the borders not only makes travel simpler for people, but also facilitates the trips of tourists and businessmen, which is very important and beneficial for the development of economic relations. "Exempting Kuwaitis from the Schengen visa," she said, "can also have a very positive psychological effect, which makes us tangibly feel the presence of a rapprochement between our peoples."



She went on to add, "We tested this strongly in Europe when we established the "free-trading" Schengen area, which did much to

increase the sense of belonging to a collective European identity."

Regarding the possibility of holding a French-Gulf summit similar to the US-Gulf summit, the French envoy stressed that the Gulf region remains, as it has always been, a strategic region for the world, and its security and stability are extremely important to all.

She noted that France considers the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, including Kuwait, to be valuable partners who can contribute significantly to solving various global and regional issues.

India to begin issuing e-passports

In a bid to facilitate international travel and ensure an added-layer of security for passport details of the holder, India is to begin issuing chip-based e-passports to all applicants by the end of the year. Although the concept of replacing current passports with e-passports was announced last year, it was not clear when the roll-out to citizens would begin.

Now, Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishanker, while speaking during an event held to mark Passport Seva Divas on 24 June, confirmed that the new e-passports will begin to replace current passports before the end of the year. He added that with this service the government reaffirms



its commitment to deliver citizens with the next level of experience.

The new e-passports, which follow International Civil Aviation

Organization (ICAO) specifications, will have an electronic Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip embedded in it that will store all

crucial details of the passport holder. An antenna embedded as an inlay in the back cover will transmit the passport details to immigration and security officials at airports thereby speeding up immigration clearances at international airports.

The new e-passport adheres to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards, and is expected to reduce the circulation of forged or duplicated passports and enhance security by preventing the tampering of passport details.

In a trial-run in 2021, the government issued over 20,000 e-passports to select government officials, including diplomatic staff.

Indian tech-giant, Tata Consultancy

Services (TCS) has been appointed to work on the back-end services for the passport, and as part of this agreement will set up a command and control center for e-passport services at the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi and a new data center to provide the back-end services.

All 36 passport offices in India will issue e-passports after the components of the personalization system are installed in the current issuance system. The government is reported to have set a target for the issuance of nearly 10,000 e-passports per hour and 50,000 per day, with the potential to accelerate this output to 20,000 per hour and 100,000 per day.

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